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Message Text

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45
ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 AGR-20 SP-03 AID-20 EB-11

NSC-07 RSC-01 CIEP-02 TRSE-00 SS-20 STR-08 OMB-01

CEA-02 COME-00 L-03 H-03 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00

INRE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 SCI-06 SWF-02 PA-04

PRS-01 PM-07 DRC-01 EUR-25 DODE-00 /174 W
---------- 100337
O 121417Z JUL 74
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7711

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 5101

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAGR, EG
SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN COTTON LEAF WORM
PROBLEM - AIRLIFT

REF: CAIRO 4857; STATE 146156

1. PRIOR TO MY DEPARTURE FOR ALEXANDRIA YESTERDAY, FONMIN FAHMY SENT WORD THAT HE WANTED TO SEE ME THERE. UPON ARRIVAL IN ALEXANDRIA, I WAS TOLD A MEETING HAD BEEN SET UP AT 1700 AT HIS BEACH CABIN. WHEN I ARRIVED, MIN OF AGRICULTURE ZAKI AND AMBASSADOR OMAR SIRRI WERE ALSO PRESENT. (ZAKI HAS REPORTEDLY BEEN ILL PAST WEEK OR SO AND MINISTER OF SUDANESE AFFAIRS BADRAN IS ACTING FOR HIM.)

2. FAHMY STARTED BY REMINDING ME OF HIS REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO AVERT A "CALAMITY" IN CONNECTION WITH THE COTTON WORM INFESTATION (CAIRO 4579). HE ALSO RECALLED THAT HE DESCRIBED IT AS "WORSE THAN AN EARTHQUAKE." WHAT HAD BEEN DONE ABOUT HIS AND THE MIN OF AGRICULTURE'S REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE,
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HE WANTED TO KNOW?

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3. I TOLD HIM I WAS GLAD HE ASKED. I HAD INDEED SUBMITTED HIS COMMENTS AND ALSO REPORTED MY TALK WITH MIN ZAKI ABOUT THE PROBLEM AND WHAT MIGHT BE DONE TO HELP (CAIRO 4746). ADDITIONALLY, I HAD SENT AN EMBOFF TO DISCUSS WITH ZAKI'S DEPUTY EGYPTIAN INSECTICIDE REQUIREMENTS TO MEET THE THREAT (CAIRO 4575, 4746). I KNEW THAT WASHINGTON WAS LOOKING INTO THE MATTER TO SEE HOW IT MIGHT HELP. IT WAS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT GOE HAS ALREADY BEEN IN TOUCH WITH SUPPLIERS TO CONTRACT FOR VARIOUS INSECTICIDES. THESE, I GATHER, ARE IN SHORT SUPPLY WORLD-WIDE (STATE 145927). WE WERE ALSO CONSIDERING EGYPTIAN REQUEST FOR AIRLIFT OF CERTAIN INSECTICIDES.

4. IN REGARD TO FIHMY'S SPECIFICREQUEST, WE HAVE SENT TWO AMERICAN EXPERTS TO SURVEY THE SITUATION. THEY HAVE BEEN HERE FOR THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS AND HAVE VISITED ALL THE AFFECTED UPPER EGYPT PROVINCES. THEY HAD REPORTED TO ME JUST PRIOR TO MY DEPARTURE FOR ALEXANDRIA YESTERDAY MORNING THAT THE COTTON WORM SITUATION, WHILE APPARENTLY BAD IN JUNE, WAS THANKS TO EGYPTIAN EFFORTS NOW UNDER CONTROL. FROM THEIR OBSERVATIONS AND TALKS WITH EGYPTIAN OFFICIALS IN THOSE PROVINCES, I HAD TO TELL FAHMY AND

ZAKI THAT OUR EXPERTS DID NOT SENSE ANY CRISIS. I WAS PUZZLED, THEREFORE, HOW TO PROCEED. I THOUGHT IT WAS IN ALL OF OUR INTERESTS NOT TO CRY WOLF WHEN THIS IS NOT NECESSARY. AN AIRLIFT WOULD BE AN EXPENSIVE OPERATION FOR EGYPTIANS. MOREOVER, UNDERSTAND FROM THE PRESS THAT THE EGYPTIAN AIR FORCE WAS GOING TO FLY IN INSECTICIDES.

5. FAHMY AND ZAKI WERE TAKEN SOMEWHAT ABACK. ZAKI CONTENDED THAT HE, AS A US-TRAINED ENTOMOLOGIST, KNOWS THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE PROBLEM BETTER THAN ANYONELSE. EVEN IF THE JUNE INFESTATION HAD INDEED BEEN MANAGED, A SECOND WAS COMING UP IN A WEEK'S TIME IN JULY AND A THIRD IN AUGUST. HE FEARED THAT AFTER CONFIDENTIAL

THE FIRST HEAVY INFESTATION, THE SECOND AND THIRD MIGHT BE EQUALLY SEVERE. HE HAD TO BE PREPARED FOR THIS CONTINGENCY. COULD OUR EXPERTS GUARANTEE THAT THERE WOULD BE NO SERIOUS INFESTATIONS IN JULY AND AUGUST? IF THERE IS ONE, AND HE CLAIMED FULLY TO EXPECT ONE, IT WOULD BE TOO LATE TO START TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT THEN. HE MUST TAKE PRECAUTIONAHY MEASURES NOW. EGYPT'S COTTON CROP, HE REPEATEDLY

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EMPHASIZED, IS AT STAKE. EGYPTIAN AIR FORCE IS ONLY
CAPABLE OF BRINGING IN 100 TONS OF THE INSECTICIDES FROM
ABROAD. MORE IS NEEDED.

6. I SAID I FULLY RESPECTED ZAKI'S VIEWS, BUT I
HAD TO TELL HIM CANDIDLY IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR AN
OUTSIDER TOARRIVE AT A BALANCED JUDGMENT ON THE
SITUATION FROM THE TOTALLY CONFLICTING REPORTS. WE WANTED

TO HELP TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLEIF THERE IS A
REAL CRISIS. BUT IF THERE IS NONE, RESOURCES WHICH
WOULD HAVE TO BE USED FOR AN AIRLIFT, COULD BE DEVOTED
FOR BETTER USE ELESEWHERE. FAHMY INTERJECTED
TO SAY THAT THE US AIR FORCE SHOULD AIRLIFT
INSECTICIDES TO EGYPT FREE OF CHARGE. THIS WOULD
BE A SPLENDID GESTURE OF COOPERATION. I SAID I HAD SO
RECOMMENDED, BUT HAD ALSO TO TELL HIM THAT I WAS NOT HOPEFUL
THAT THE US AIR FORCE WOULD MOUNT AN AIRLIFT FREE OF CHARGE.
FUNDS WOULD HAVE TO COME FROM SOMEWHERE. THERE IS
AS YET NO AID APPROPRIATION FOR EGYPT. HENCE,
FUNDING POSES A PROBLEM.

7. FAHMY AND ZAKI BOTH ASKED THAT I AGAIN APPEAL
FOR HELP IN A) PRESSING INSECTICIDE SUPPLIERS TO PROVIDE
MORE FOR EGYPT, AND B) EVEN MORE IMPORTANTLY, TO
AIRLIFT INSECTICIDES TO BE HERE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.
HE NOTED (AND AMERICAN EXPERTS CONCUR) THAT SECOND
INFESTATION COULD BEGIN AROUND JULY 22. I REMINDED

THEM DEPT/AID ARE ALREADY LOOKING INTO HOW WE CAN
HELP, BUT ALSO UNDERTOOK TO REPORT THEIR COMMENTS.

8. COMMENT: RE PARA 4, STATE 146156, IT IS FRANKLY
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DIFFICULT TO GET A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF SCOPE AND
CRITICALITY OF ALLEGED EMERGENCY SITUATION. AS WE
PIECE THE PROBLEM TOGETHER, FIRST INFESTATION APPEARS
TO HAVE BEEN SUCESSFULLY MANAGED BY USING EGYPTIAN
MANPOWER HANDPICKING EGG MASSES AND EARLY SPRAYING.
AS A RESULT, INSECTICIDE STOCKS ARE RELATIVELY
LOW. SECOND AND THIRD INFESTATIONS, WHICH NORMALLY
COME IN JULY AND AUGUST RESPECTIVELY, ARE IMPOSSIBLE
TO ASSESS IN ADVANCE, BUT MIN OF AGRICULTURE IS
DESPERATELY WORRIED THAT DURING SECOND AND THIRD CONCEIVABLY
HIGH INFESTATIONS, INSECTICIDE STOCKS MAY PROVE TO BE
INADEQUATE. MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, AND SPECIFICALLY
ZAKI, WILL TAKE THE BLAME. HENCE, WHAT EGYPTIANS ARE
IN EFFFCT ASKING US IS TO MAKE SPECIAL EFFORT TO ASSIST
THEM IN PROCURING NEEDED INSECTICIDES AND AIRLIFTING

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THEM TO CAIRO TO BE AVAILABLE IN THE EVENT SECOND AND THIRD

INFESTATIONS ARE HIGH.

9. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THEY ARE WORRIED ABOUT THE COTTON CROP. I KNOW FROM FAHMY THAT SADAT ENDORSED FORMER'S REQUEST, AND HEGAZI HAS INDEPENDENTLY SPOKEN TO ME ABOUT THE SUBJECT (CAIRO 4713). FAHMY HAS GOTTEN HIS PRESTIGE INVOLVED IN GETTING US ASSISTANCE AND SO HE IS NOW ALSO PUSHING FOR AIRLIFT WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS ACTUAL EMERGENCY IN STRICT SENSE OF TERM.

10. OUR ENTOMOLOGISTS ARE NOW IN THE DELTA FOR THREE OR FOUR DAYS. WE WILL DISCUSS MATTER AGAIN WITH THEM WHEN THEY RETURN TO CAIRO TO SEE IF NECESSARY JUSTIFICATION FOR DECLARATION OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY CAN BE MADE. IN MEANTIME, REQUEST DEPT/AID CONTINUE PLANNING. WE WILL SEEK OBTAIN ANSWERS TO STATE 135927 ASAP AND ADVISE. WE ARE ALSO ATTEMPTING GET CLEAR IDEA OF EXACT AMOUNTS THAT MAY BE INVOLVED IN POSSIBLE AIRLIFT. WITH REGARD TO ROTTERDAM SHIPMENTS, THERE IS DISCREPANCY BETWEEN OUR ESTIMATES (PARA 4, STATE 145927) AND WHAT EGYPTIAN MIN OF AGRICULTURE HAS GIVEN US.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PEST CONTROL, PESTS OF PLANTS, PLANT DISEASES, PESTICIDES, SURVEYS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 JUL 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: shawdg
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974CAIRO05101
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740186-1141
From: CAIRO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740755/aaaabuqj.tel
Line Count: 193
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: CAIRO 4857; STATE 146156
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: shawdg
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 MAY 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <28 MAY 2002 by elyme>; APPROVED <26 FEB 2003 by shawdg>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EGYPTIAN COTTON LEAF WORM PROBLEM - AIRLIFT
TAGS: EAGR, EG, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

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